



Governor Warner's Senior Year Plus initiative transforms the senior year of high school, offering new options for students to get a jump on their college careers or achieve an industry certification to enable them to get a better, higher-paying job.

The senior year of high school should be a transition year that launches students toward success in college or a career in the 21st Century economy. The traditional high school experience works well for many students: they earn a high school diploma and go on to college, or they earn a diploma and an industry certification and enter the workforce right after graduation.

But far too often, the traditional route culminates in a senior year in which students merely mark time. Students "check out" academically after college acceptance, and those with no college plans endure a final year of high school without the necessary thought to attaining job skills.

Many students graduate from high school with more credits than are required for an advanced diploma, but they fail to use these extra credits towards their next degree. Other students begin their senior year without plans to attend college, but they finish high school without the skills needed to enter the workforce.

While a high school diploma is a minimum credential for any career, economists have shown that college degrees or other career credentials mean better-paying jobs. The

Governor's Senior Year Plus initiative offers two options that will better prepare students for life after high school, while reducing the cost of college tuition for families.

Path to Industry Certification

✦ The Governor's Senior Year Plus initiative encourages students who are not college bound to continue working towards high school graduation while pursuing technical training for a selected industry certification, such as a Licensed Practical Nurse or Auto Body and Collision Technician. Often, this technical preparation will continue after graduation from high school.

✦ Participating students and their parents will sign a *Student Compact* agreeing that the student will complete high school and then enroll in further technical training to acquire the appropriate skills and certifications needed to enter a higher-wage career.

✦ Typically, students will continue to take industry-specific training at their local community college during the summer and fall after graduation. Up to one semester of technical

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Education for a Lifetime

training will be available tuition-free to students in the same calendar year after graduation from high school, as long as that semester allows them to complete the certification program.

- ✦ This initiative also establishes teacher-training academies to increase the number of high school teachers with appropriate industry certifications to teach the required course.

Early College Scholars

- ✦ Currently, about one in five Virginia high school seniors takes a dual-enrollment, college-level class, and about three-quarters of high schools offer some Advanced Placement (AP) courses. However, very few schools allow seniors to earn up to a full semester of college credit. Under the Governor's Senior Year Plus initiative, eligible high school seniors can complete their high school diploma and concurrently earn a semester's worth of credits (15 credit hours) that can be used towards a college degree. These students would be noted in college applications as Early College Scholars.

- ✦ Students earning a college degree in seven semesters instead of eight can save an average of \$5,000 in tuition. This initiative can also help alleviate the space considerations

created by the expected influx of 61,000 additional students seeking admission to Virginia colleges and universities by the year 2010.

- ✦ Students and their parents will sign an agreement outlining the requirements for participation. College-level courses offered through dual enrollment or Advanced Placement will be available to these students. Up to 1,500 students will be eligible for assistance on the cost of AP exams.

- ✦ Under the Governor's initiative, a *Virtual Advanced Placement School* will provide Virginia high school students with access to a broader range of AP courses via existing distance-learning networks, regardless of where the student lives.

- ✦ An *Electronic Bulletin Board* will show how any student can earn college credits while in high school, through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment and other options. This Web site also will include information on the college credit policies of Virginia colleges and universities.

- ✦ A statewide coordinator, "virtual" counselors, and school-based career guidance and academic advising software will support the Senior Year Plus initiative.

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